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ABSTRACT

Ego development is an implicit aim of higher education and can be one of its most significant results, according to R. P. Weathersby. There are several developmental stages, each having characteristics to describe personality traits, style of behavior, conscious preoccupations, and ways of thinking. From lowest level to highest, the stages are: (1) impulsive; (2) self-protective; (3) conformist; (4) conscientious-conformist (self-awareness); (5) conscientious; (6) individualistic; (7) autonomous; and (8) integrated. Researchers have shown how concepts about the roles of students and faculty and teaching practices correspond to ego development stages. Generally speaking, instruction based on lectures and exams corresponds to the conformist or a lower stage. By contrast, instructional methods permitting active participation, discussion, and decision making are better suited for students in the middle and higher stages. Guided design is a teaching strategy in which small groups work together to make decisions about open-ended problems. The teacher guides students in a slowed-down process written in the form of instructions and feedbacks. Use of guided design in a theater history course improved student interest and achievement dramatically in one semester, even though adapting the content to the strategy was difficult and time consuming. An outline of the method using a hypothetical problem serves as an illustration. Examination of ego development strongly suggests that active participation in the higher order thinking skills is likely to produce more deeply understood, complex outlooks on life. (SG)

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"WHAT'S GOOD" "WHAT'S NEXT":
Understanding the Personal and Transformative Meaning of Education through Guided Design

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"WHAT'S GOOD" "WHAT'S NEXT"

Understanding the Personal and Transformative Meaning of Education through Guided Design

The title is derived from two opening paragraphs of Rita Preszler Weathersby's chapter "Ego Development" in The Modern American College. She begins by saying that ego development is an implicit aim of higher education and can be one of its most significant results. She submits that knowledge of ego development provides a "map for growth," which can help us find the best ways to reach our students (Weathersby, 1984). Development through stages informs us about "what's good" and "what's next" for students in their journey through academia where they are testing their intellectual capacities.

The Meaning of Ego Development

The first task is to see what Weathersby means by ego development, and then to see how Guided Design, a teaching strategy incorporating small group decision-making, can enhance intellectual growth for the undergraduate student. What is surprising to discover is that the definition of ego development is not the Freudian idea of ego, super ego, and id, nor is it one's self-concept or self-esteem. Instead, it is "that aspect of personality that 'keeps things together' by striving for coherence and assigning meaning to experience" (Weathersby, 1984). Ego development is understood as a hierarchy of world

views which progresses in sequence chronologically recognizing interrelated patterns of cognitive, interpersonal, and ethical growth. Jane Loevinger (1970, 1976) and associates studied and synthesized ego development based on other psychological researchers by putting together insights regarding personality types and other philosophical and humanistic studies. It was possible to categorize stages of development to show how each represents a qualitatively different way of responding to life experience.

Weathersby explains that each stage or world view can be illustrated by representative types of individuals from Archie Bunker to Mahatma Gandhi. There are seven stages, each having characteristics to describe personality traits, style of behavior, conscious preoccupations, and ways of thinking. From lowest level to highest they are: Impulsive, Self-Protective, Conformist, Conscientious-Conformist (Self-Aware), Conscientious, Individualistic, Autonomous, and Integrated. The purpose here is not to specify the characteristics of each stage as do Loevinger and Weathersby but rather to look at the stages where most college students would be expected to be and to see if Guided Design as a teaching strategy is likely to provide opportunities for students to grow and move to more advanced stages.

The earliest of the stages in ego development are usually thought of as growth in childhood. If students were at the Self-Protective stage, for example, they would think in stereotypes, reason illogically, use personal relationships for advantage and

control, follow rules when it suits them, and generally blame others or circumstances for things going wrong. At the highest end of the scale, the Integrated Stage, identity is the chief preoccupation and individuality is cherished in the broadest humanistic terms, a stage not unlike Maslow's (1971) description of self-actualizing persons. Loevinger finds this stage difficult to study because it is so rarely found. We are cautioned that ego development is not a trivial, easily accomplished personality change. Erikson (1968) is quoted as saying, "Ego identity gains real strength only from wholehearted achievement that has meaning in our culture" (p. 135). Sanford (1962) is more detailed in explaining it as "Anything that increases the likelihood that the sense of self will be based on personal experience rather than on outside judgment favors the stabilization of ego identity. Being placed in social roles that require new responses, having to make decisions concerning what roles one is going to take, learning from experience that some roles are suited and others not suited to one's interests and needs--any situation that brings awareness to one's real preferences and inner continuities helps to establish sound ego identity. So, too, does the condition of being relatively free from circumstances, whether unconscious drives or external pressures, that force one to cling to an earlier inadequate identity"(p.281). Weathersby summarizes the three basic conditions that foster ego development as: (1) varied direct experiences and roles, (2) meaningful achievement, and (3)

relative freedom from anxiety and pressure" (Weathersby, 1984, p.56). She cites data to show that most traditional-age college students (18 to 21-year olds) start out at the Conformist or Self-Aware Stage and then move beyond but probably not past the Conscientious Stage.

The Conformist Stage is the third level of ego development. It follows the Self-Protective Stage. It has several characteristics (Weathersby, 1984, p.53).

CONFORMIST STAGE

Students are concerned with appearances and social acceptability.

Tendency to think in terms of stereotypes and cliches.

Group differences are perceived in terms of obvious external characteristics, for example age, race, marital status, and nationality.

There is little or no sensitivity to individual differences.

They are concerned with conforming to external rules.

Emotions are described with little distinction or introspection.

The next stage is the Conscientious-Conformist Transition. It is also called the Self Aware Stage. It has slightly different characteristics (Weathersby, 1984, p.55).

SELF-AWARE STAGE

An increasing ability to think in terms of alternatives, exceptions, and multiple possibilities in situations.

They become aware of how they are different from social

groups.

Concerned with taking advantage of opportunities, solving problems, finding reasons for the way life works.

Adjust to situations and roles.

The Conscientious Stage, the next level, is the third stage of ego development to which the traditional-age college might advance in four years (Weathersby, 1984, p.55).

CONSCIENTIOUS STAGE

Self-evaluated standards.

Rules are seen as not absolute.

Reasoning is based more on analytical patterns, and it becomes more complex.

Students can see that actions may depend on circumstances and exceptions are recognized.

Achievement and self-respect valued highly.

More of a sense of relating to others and having a sense of responsibility.

There is a deeper sense of self-understanding and awareness of psychological causes.

There is a greater feeling for society as a whole and individuals perceive long-term goals and ideals.

Real choices in life are acknowledged.

It is interesting to note that although data for faculty and administrators is not as plentiful as it is for students, a small sample (Weathersby,1977) suggests that scores of faculty and

administrators are slightly higher than students' scores but, they cover the same range, excluding scores that showed some students to be in the earlier stage, the one before the Conformist Stage.

Group Decision-Making Through Guided Design

Arthur Chickering (1976) has shown in broad terms how concepts about the roles of students and faculty and teaching practices corresponded to stages in ego development by using materials developed by Harry Lasker. It was revealed that generally speaking instruction based on lectures and exams corresponds to the Conformist Stage or lower in which the teacher acts as the transmitter of knowledge and the certifier of the students' mastery. Weathersby says, "This is teaching to the lowest common denominator" (Weathersby, 1984, p. 73). On the other hand, instructional methods permitting active participation and involving discussion, and that require students to make decisions around goals, activities, and standards of methods of evaluation are more suited to students at the middle and higher stages. She suggests that these methods are also more likely to create the interpersonal interactions and self-questioning that facilitate development (Weathersby, 1984, p.73).

Guided Design is a teaching strategy organized in such a way that students work together in small groups of five to seven and proceed to make group decisions. They solve open-ended problems or resolve issues. The teacher guides students in a slowed-down process written in the form of instructions and feedbacks.

Progress depends on research and group discussion to reveal the facts, consider values and make the decision step-by-step in a procedure that includes: Identify the Problem and STATE THE GOAL, GENERATE IDEAS, PREPARE A PLAN, and TAKE ACTION (Wales, Nardi, and Stager, 1986). Each of these operations require discussion and a consensus that is written down before proceeding to the next operation. Each stage is further broken down into three modes of thinking: Analysis, synthesis, evaluation. For example in the first operation -- Identify the Problem and STATE THE GOAL -- the group analyzes the problem by asking the questions: Who? What? Where? Why? When? How? The synthesis mode considers goal options, and in the evaluation mode a goal statement is selected. Once the goal is selected the group can move on to the next operation, GENERATE IDEAS, and again ask the questions, create plan options, and select a plan. This is the procedure followed in the succeeding operations as well. Wales, Nardi, and Stager give many examples of how this strategy can be used for classroom discussion in a variety of subjects.

When I adapted this strategy for teaching Theatre History student interest and course evaluations improved dramatically and the national IDEA course evaluation showed that Self Progress Rating in factual knowledge, principles and theories, professional skills, discipline's methods, thinking and problem solving, creative capacities, effective communication, personal responsibility, general liberal education, implications for self understanding all improved from one semester to the next.

Evaluation of Teaching Methods also improved markedly in all of the ten categories listed on the form (Borchardt, 1985).

Application of the Strategy

Probably the most difficult aspect of changing teaching methods for a course is in adapting the content to the strategy. It takes time to outline units of material to the decision-making mode of instruction. I wrote fifteen hypothetical situations that could include the required reading of about ten plays each semester in addition to other reading from secondary sources as well as audio-visual aids such as cassette lectures in the library, slides and films or video tapes that could be shown in class. The fifteen hypothetical problems with learning objectives and written instructions and feedbacks were published in a book Think Tank Theatre (Borchardt, 1984). One example will illustrate how this was done.

The title of the problem is called "Paper Case." The idea was inspired by the television series called Paper Chase in which episodes concern a law professor and assignments he gives to his students. The "Study Guide" assigns two plays to read, Zoo Story by Edward Albee and The Chairs by Eugene Ionesco. These are plays from the movement of Theatre of the Absurd in the 1960's. Ordinarily, learning objectives would be stated before beginning the class discussions but in this case the students are to formulate their own learning objectives as part of the problem. The situation is stated as follows:

"Tom Clark is a graduate student and teaching assistant at

State University. He is majoring in Theatre Arts with emphasis in theatre history. Someday he hopes to teach theatre courses and direct plays in a small college. He has taken undergraduate survey courses, acting, directing, and technical courses in production; he is presently taking a seminar in theatre history with Professor Wylie.

Professor Wylie also teaches an introductory drama survey course for freshmen. He normally lectures and covers a variety of topics in drama and theatre from ancient to modern times. Toward the end of the term Wylie realized he would have to miss several classes in order to attend a conference in Kansas City.

Since Tom was a good student Wylie asked him to fill in. The class had been assigned two short plays to read: The Chairs by Eugene Ionesco and Zoo Story by Edward Albee. Tom was told he would be free to conduct the class in any way he chose, but to make preparation beforehand on paper.

Professor Wylie left his hotel telephone number in case Tom needed his assistance. Tom accepted the challenge willingly. He was inexperienced at teaching and felt this would be a good opportunity. He was familiar with both plays. He had read them, directed one of them as an undergraduate exercise and he had seen a student production

of the other."

Instruction A is: State the Goal. State the goal as you think Tom Clark might formulate it.

Students at this point start to discuss the situation, identify the problem, create goal options, select a goal. When they have done that they turn to Feedback A to compare their statement with the one in the feedback. Feedback A says, "Tom Clark thought his goal was to make plans for teaching two class periods of an introductory drama course." Then they move on to the next instruction.

Instruction B: Objectives.

"Tom knew that the students were not going to be a class of theatre majors. Many of them would be taking the course to satisfy a humanities requirement. A few might seriously be considering a major in theatre or related subjects. Others would have a passing curiosity about acting or playwriting and some would consider theatre as an enjoyable pastime or avocation. They would be accustomed to listening to Professor Wylie's lectures. And, since this was toward the end of the term motivation and ambition would be waning, judging from his own experience as a student. He thought, first, he should establish three or four learning objectives.

He would write down on paper what he wanted the students to

learn. That is, what would he expect the students to know or be able to do at the end of his class period?"

Each group in the class discusses what the learning objectives should be. They would write it down on paper. Then they compare what they have written with the objectives stated in Feedback B.

Feedback B: Learning Objectives.

"1. To be able to explain the themes of Zoo Story and The Chairs.

2. To understand these plays in relation to the Theatre of the Absurd movement.

3. To imagine how these plays affected audiences.

4. To compare similarities and differences between these plays.

5. To place Ionesco and Albee as playwrights of importance in the historical context."

They see how closely they agree or disagree. These were not meant to be the correct answers but rather those a professional might use. The feedbacks are designed to be an informed point of view but not necessarily the correct or only answers. They are ready to go to the next instruction.

Instruction C: Possible strategies for implementing learning objectives.

"Tom was determined to plot his teaching strategy and carry it out without calling long distance to Professor Wylie. He would prefer to try, and if necessary, fail in the attempt than to admit to Wylie that he didn't know how

to proceed. Anyway, he was a good student. He was confident he could find a way to achieve his objectives; he would talk it over with fellow students, and perhaps solicit their help. He met with several of them in his room. They came up with several alternatives.

If you were helping Tom, what would you suggest? List several possibilities."

Student groups then decide what strategies they might use. When their lists are completed they go on to compare them with the one listed in Feedback C.

Feedback C: Strategies.

"1. Lecture, since it was what Wylie did and students were accustomed to it.

2. He could find out if the library had any filmstrips, records, or films that would provide illustrative material to discuss.

3. Have the students write questions or reactions to the plays, hand them in, and then he could respond to them.

4. He might read scenes from the plays himself and ask the students to respond.

5. He might get fellow students experienced in performing to read or act out short scenes from each as demonstrations and then discuss them.

6. He could divide the class into small groups (if the class were not too large), and have each group prepare a scene; then discuss the results.

7. He could give critical quotations from theatre historians or theorists about the Theatre of the Absurd, and discuss them.
8. He might prepare a hypothetical theatre problem using the two plays and have students work in groups to solve the problem; e.g., how to design a set, consider all visual aspects of staging, or, how a director might go about casting actors to play the roles."

After the groups compare their lists with this one they proceed to the next instruction.

Instruction D: Choose the "best" strategy, implement, evaluate.

"Tom appreciated all the suggestions he received. He would now have to choose the best strategy for himself, and carry it out."

If you were Tom, which one would you choose? Carry out the plan as best you can, selecting a representative or representatives if necessary. Make an outline of the plan on paper before proceeding. Present the plan for other groups in the class:

1. Who will do what? What are the responsibilities of each member of the group?
2. What will the procedure be? What will be needed? Equipment? Special space?
3. When will this be done?

4. Where will the presentation take place? In the classroom? An experimental theatre space? Film or slide viewing room?
5. How will this be implemented? Sequence of presentations, panel, performance, discussion? Will someone give an introduction? How long will it take?
6. Why was this strategy chosen rather than another?"

Depending on the number of students and the number of groups, each can be given a designated portion of the class time to make the presentation. When all presentations have been given they go on to the final feedback.

Feedback D: Evaluation.

"The feedback in this case will be an evaluation of how the 'best' strategy worked in class. Did it achieve the objectives? How did students respond? Would you repeat this strategy if faced with the challenge again? Was it a sound educational method? Was there sufficient communication of content regarding theatre or drama?"

Essentially, this problem followed the Guided Design outline of Identify the Problem and STATE THE GOAL, GENERATE IDEAS, PREPARE A PLAN, and TAKE ACTION. Students are given the opportunity to participate with direct experience and in different roles, they discuss and prepare with relative freedom from anxiety and pressure and when the assignment is complete they feel that they have achieved the goal. These are the conditions Weathersby

names for fostering ego development.

Student groups in the past have responded to the above problem with a variety of solutions. On occasion they divide factual material from the plays or secondary sources to present in a shared mini-lecture. Others have chosen to cast themselves in the roles of a scene and use the script to present it with their own sense of action and dialogue. Several have chosen to improvise a scene based on the scene from the play. They change character names and think of a comparable situation from their own experience. One group chose to devise an cryptogram contest using terminology from Theatre of the Absurd and information about the plays and authors to make the puzzle. They had the other students work on the puzzle and gave a prize to the student who found the most words. A filmstrip with sound was used on at least one occasion. A unique idea was decided in a group when it rented a Monty Python film and played a scene on a VCR for the rest of the class. The scene was one in which a man comes into the restaurant and orders food, and more food, and more food. As he eats his whole body expands like a balloon until it literally explodes. This was likened to the ideas behind the plays of Albee and Ionesco. The class was divided up for one presentation as if it were the Family Fued game show. Questions devised from the plays and secondary sources were used to see which side could answer the most questions correctly. Another group simulated a classroom situation with teacher and students who carried on a discussion about Theatre of the Absurd in front of the other

groups. These activities promote interpersonal relationships among the students and between instructor and students.

Evaluation of the Strategy

Using hypothetical problems such as this and using a Guided Design format for group decision-making has provided a learning environment in which students learn by interacting with peers as well as with the instructor. Over five years students have written about their own development in an optional question given as part of the final take-home examination. They are asked if their attitude toward the subject changed since the beginning of the term and if so what they thought was responsible for the change. Following are statements or excerpts from longer answers that are typical of more than a hundred responses:

> "A typical course would involve attending lectures and cramming for exams, but not really learning anything by coming to my own conclusions. ...Surprisingly, as a result of this course, my feelings about theatre history and the theatre in general, have changed greatly during the semester. This can be attributed mainly to the group decision-making process and solving the open-ended problems in theatre production. ...Instead of being told the answer, we had to use our imagination and education to come up with our own conclusions. ...Furthermore, the format of Think Tank Theatre gave us freedom to solve the problem in a variety of ways."

"The class discussions helped a lot because I found that open discussion helps people learn a lot faster than if they were to listen to just one person's ideas. In this class we were able to express our true feelings without being told we had to agree with what the teacher believes."

"The class discussions, for me, were a big help because I got different viewpoints of a play that I might have missed. Also, it was not like most classes I've had where the students read a play and the instructor gives his interpretation and that's it. Only one interpretation. In Theatre History we got your interpretation plus room to expand and build and formulate our own ideas. It was the first time I could disagree about a play without being penalized for it."

"In no other course I have taken were we required to approach problems and develop solutions in a group rather than as an individual. ...it is a technique which I can apply to other courses and other areas of my life."

"I understand the importance of the papers I have written because they explained theatre history in such a developed way that I don't think I would have absorbed as much info through straight lecture and multiple choice exams like in my other courses. ...(And I've also made some great

friendships to last!)"

"I was forced to evaluate all elements of life, those real and those that rest in the imagination. In the end, I've learned a great deal about myself, through reflecting my values, ideals, and opinions into these timeless works, and if that is not victory of the educational process, I don't know what is."

"The problem solving approach allows students to comprehend information, organize it, analyze and debate the facts and develop a meaningful solution to the problem. The guidance and experience the instructor offers enables the group to apply what is learned to real life, thus enabling students to achieve a sense of accomplishment, knowing the learning objectives were fully attained."

Under the subtitle "Implications for Instruction" Weathersby does not propose that measures of ego development be used like intelligence tests or for sorting students or indicators of program effectiveness. She does not think that ego development can be forced or that there is enough knowledge about the dynamics of transformative stages to structure programs toward ego development. But she does say that "...exposure to higher-level reasoning, opportunities to take others' roles and perspectives, discomfiting discrepancies between one's actual

experiences in a situation and one's current explanations and beliefs..." (Weathersby, 1984, p.71) are basic elements of the transition process. She believes there are ways to open doors and to help students open doors for themselves so they can walk through on their own if they choose to do so.

Concluding Statements

Comparison of the Guided Design strategy to stages in ego development addresses the theme of "Exploring Teaching Alternatives: Transforming Learning," adopted by The International Society for Exploring Teaching Alternatives for its 1991 annual conference. J.E.J. Habowsky expressed concern that attention be paid to the WHAT and WHY of teaching as well as the HOW (Habowsky, 1991). The WHY of teaching, after an examination of ego development, is to foster growth and maturity of both intellect and emotion from the stage of ego development students (and faculty) find themselves, to the highest level possible over four years of a college education, and then beyond. Understanding ego development is a way of motivating exploration of teaching alternatives. The WHAT of teaching need not be limited to the transmission of factual information. Strategies for solving problems and making group decisions are techniques that must be taught and applied. Guided Design is one of those strategies that gives students opportunity to learn and practice skills of process and communication while learning course content. An examination of ego development strongly suggests that active participation in the higher order thinking skills is

likely to foster changes in personality development from simple and rigid attitudes to more deeply understood and complex outlooks on life. "What's Good" is a learning environment open to the complexities of personal and interpersonal relationships where facts, assumptions and opinions are applied to problems within a discipline. "What's Next" is learning to go beyond, to continue studies and experiences that lead to the Individualistic, the Autonomous and Integrated Stages of ego development in which education is thought of as a "lifelong process essential for a full life," and as "leading to creativity, self-fulfillment, and deeper values."

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